



WE ARE OUR MOUNTAINS

Development
Agency

REPORT

On the Activities of the
"We are Our Mountains"
Development Agency

January – June
2025

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The **"We are Our Mountains" Territorial Development Agency** founded by Ruben Vardanyan and his partners at the end of 2022, implements programs to support forcibly displaced people from Artsakh and develop Syunik. During **2022-2024**, the organization implemented approximately **40 programs** with a total value of about **\$2.5 million**, which impacted the lives of more than **80,000 people**. Detailed reports on these activities are available at the following [link](#).

On September 27, 2023, during the mass displacement of Artsakh's population, the agency's founder **Ruben Vardanyan** was captured by Azerbaijani security forces and **continues to be illegally detained in Baku**. Remaining faithful to humanitarian principles, he insisted from prison on continuing charitable activities to benefit the people of Artsakh.

Since October 2023, the "We Are Our Mountains" agency has been supporting forcibly displaced families to help them overcome psychological trauma, adapt to new conditions, strengthen social connections, and achieve economic stability. The organization also creates spaces in Armenia to reveal the human potential of displaced persons.

During the period from January to **June 2025**, the agency implemented programs and initiatives worth more than **\$188 000**, impacting the lives of approximately **8 500 people** in various regions of Armenia.

Below is a list of implemented initiatives with expenditure volumes, geography, and number of beneficiaries.

IMPLEMENTED PROGRAMS

REHABILITATION PROGRAM “WINGS” FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS FORCIBLY DISPLACED FROM ARTSAKH

"The simplest way to gain wings is to give them to someone who needs them."

| Context

After the tragic events of **September 2023**, more than **120 000 Artsakh Armenians** were forced to leave their homeland. Among them were over **30 000 children**, torn from their homes and faced with harsh and uncertain living conditions. Over the past five years, these children have endured war, a months-long blockade, forced displacement, and — in their final hours on their native land — a tragic explosion that claimed hundreds of lives. Many lost family members, and their familiar world was destroyed to the core. The weight of this trauma is deeply imprinted in their hearts and souls, reflected in silent pain and anxiety.

Observing the devastating impact of trauma on children and families, many of whom became emotionally closed off, the Development Agency **“We Are Our Mountains”** formulated a clear mission: to **“give wings”** to as many children and parents from Artsakh as possible.

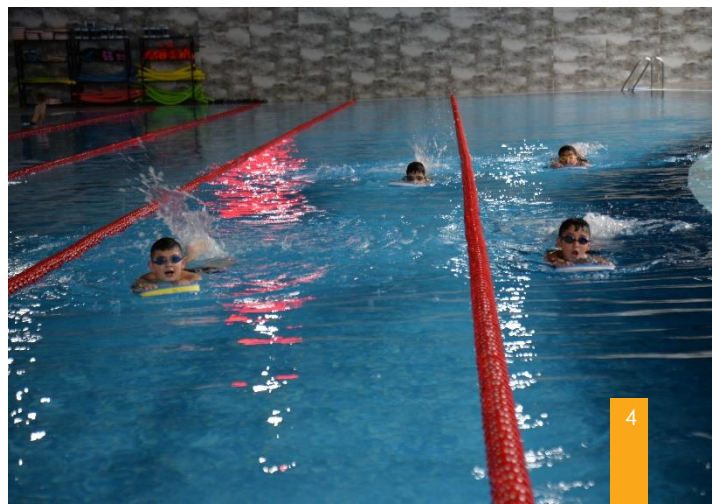
Thus, in November 2023, the **“Wings” rehabilitation program** was launched — a three-month psychosocial support initiative aimed at assisting displaced families. The program is designed not only to reduce stress levels and cope with trauma but also to restore a sense of dignity, safety, confidence, and belonging for both children and their parents

Expected Result

Our goal is to prevent the transfer of trauma to future generations. Children who receive timely and quality support are more likely to grow into emotionally resilient adults, capable of breaking the cycle of pain in their families and communities.

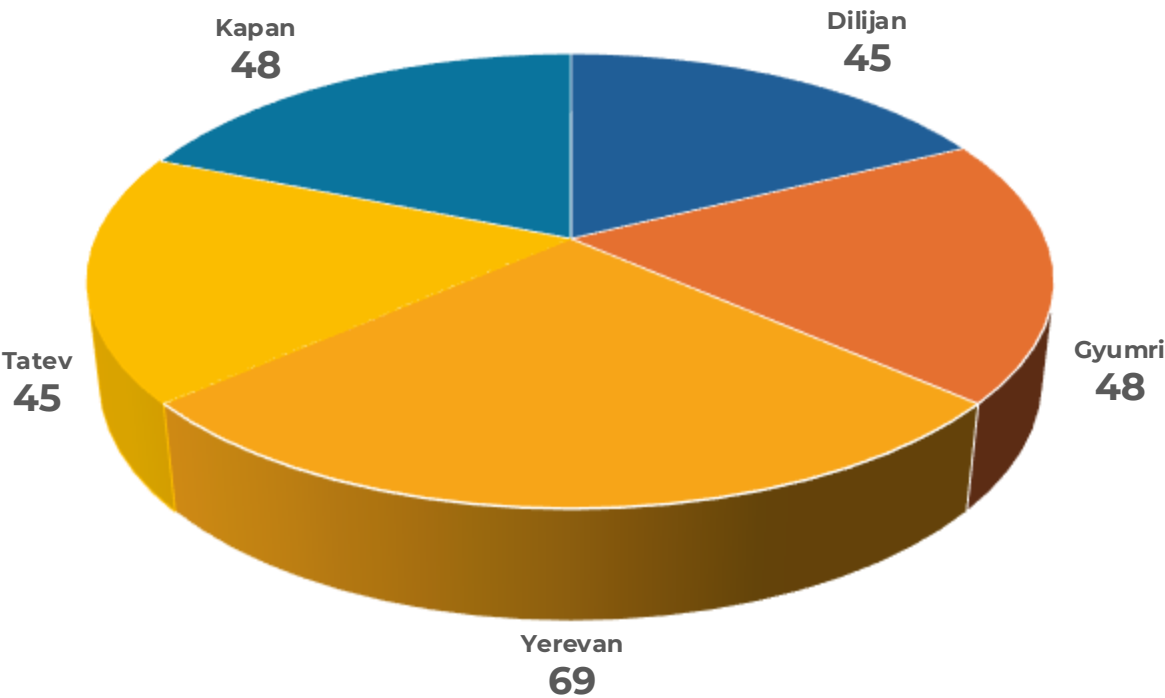
The “Wings” program is not just a crisis response, but an investment in the psychological future of an entire generation.

From **January to June 2025**, the program reached **255 children and 155 parents**.



Expected Result (January – June 2025)

- **255 children** completed the three-month rehabilitation program,
- **155 parents** participated in parallel activities aimed at strengthening family resilience,
- The program was implemented in **five locations** across different regions of Armenia, ensuring broad reach and inclusivity (see chart),
- Flexibility and support from the organization “**Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh**” (France), the charitable foundation “**Saint Sarkis Charity Trust**” (UK), and private donors enabled adaptation and scaling of the program.



Methodology and Approach

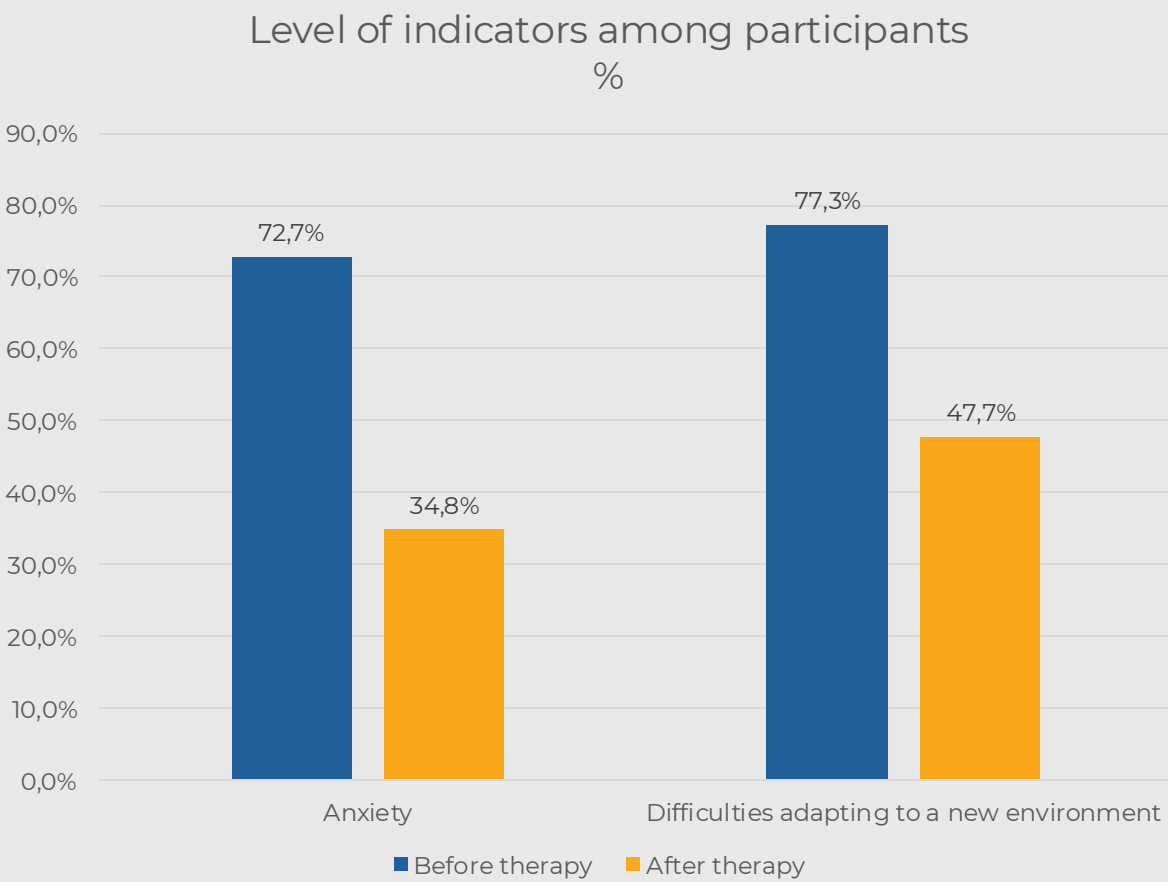
The key strength of the program lies in its comprehensiveness: it brings together psychological, physical, mental, and social aspects of recovery. During the reporting period, we added an important component — the participation of local children from the communities where the program is implemented. This decision strengthened integration, helped overcome barriers, and contributed to the formation of a solidary community. Joint activities helped create a space of mutual understanding, empathy, and trust between displaced children and their new neighbors.

Key Partners

The successful implementation of the program was made possible through close collaboration with mental health professionals and trusted local organizations. In each region, we partnered with dedicated specialists who applied a variety of trauma-informed methods, including storytelling, expressive arts, drama therapy, sand therapy, hippotherapy, mask-making, clay modeling, collage, mandala creation, string art, and more.

Evaluation of Results

Each participant undergoes an initial and final assessment before and after completing the program. A set of indicators is used, the main ones being a reduction in anxiety levels and improvement in adaptation to the new environment.



K.A., mother of participants in the “Wings – Yerevan” program

“My children participated in the ‘Wings’ program, organized by the ‘We Are Our Mountains’ Development Agency. They attended with great enthusiasm, and I am also very pleased – both with the program itself and its results.

Support was provided in two key areas: physical and psychological. Both of my children attended swimming classes at the football academy. The environment was positive, and the coaches were attentive and kind. They patiently explained everything. In just three months, the children learned how to swim – this is already a major achievement.

Psychological support was offered by the ‘Intra’ team. I am deeply grateful to the specialists – especially for their work with my younger child. After 2023, it was a very difficult time for him. He became withdrawn, struggled to attend school, and didn’t want to leave the house. Even walking in the yard was only possible after long persuasion and with our company.

Now things are better. Thanks to therapy and sessions with psychologists, he started communicating again, made friends, and is more at ease going to school. This means a lot to us. I realize I couldn’t have done it alone.

Thank you to the ‘Wings’ program and the entire ‘Intra’ team – you helped us through a difficult time.”





**L.A., mother of a participant in the
“Wings – Yerevan” program**

“My child is 13 years old and participated in the ‘Wings’ program with great interest. He really enjoyed both the sports and psychological activities.

It’s not always easy for our children to adapt to a new environment, especially when it comes to communication. Naturally, they gravitate toward those with similar experiences – most often other children from Artsakh. My child, for example, is especially close with kids from his own community. But now that we live in Armenia, it’s important that children feel part of the larger circle, that they communicate and find friends among all their peers.

Drama therapy was especially helpful. In these sessions, the children learned to express their feelings and not close themselves off. The results were clear – my child became more open in communication. I especially saw this today when I watched their performance. The children have become much more outgoing, they smile and have bonded with each other.

This program helped not only the children but also us, the mothers from Artsakh – we’ve become closer to one another as well.

I truly hope that the ‘Wings’ program will continue. This kind of support is incredibly necessary for us.”

International Recognition of the “Wings” Program

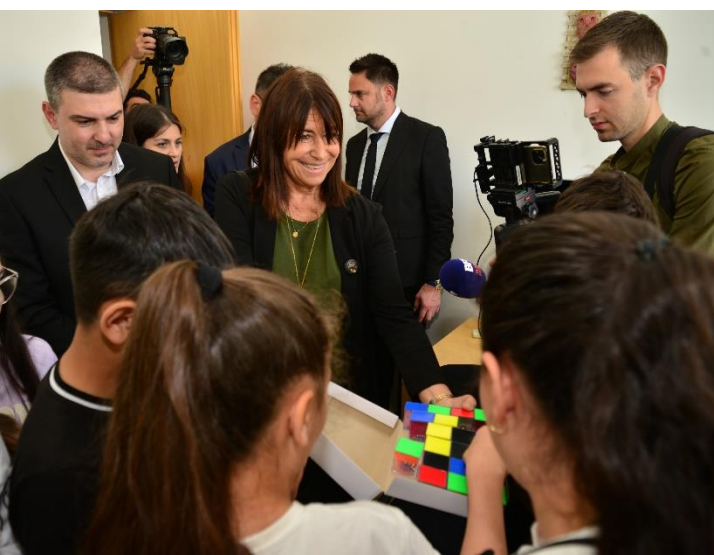
In the first half of 2025, the “Wings” program attracted international attention. In March, the “We Are Our Mountains” Development Agency hosted a delegation from the Marseille City Hall (France), headed by the First Deputy Mayor, physician Dr. Michèle Rubirola, who arrived in Armenia on an official visit.

The French delegation visited the Intra Mental Health Center in Yerevan, where they became acquainted with the implementation of the “Wings” program, supported by the “Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh.” The guests attended art therapy and drama therapy sessions, spoke with children participating in the program, and met with parents to hear their personal stories. *“I am deeply moved by everything being done here to help children and their families overcome trauma,”* noted Michèle Rubirola. *“We share your pain and admire your strength in recovering after such losses.”* Parents participating in the program shared how meaningful this initiative has become for their families. One mother, Suzanna Baghdasaryan, shared: *“Our children lost their homes, friends, and everything familiar. The ‘Wings’ program helps them smile and dream again. We are grateful that at least on Armenian soil, we can start rebuilding our lives. There is light in our children’s eyes once more – and that is what matters most.”*



“Our goal is not only to ease the effects of trauma but to help these families lay the foundation for a new life. This visit is not only a gesture of solidarity but also a confirmation that the challenges faced by the people of Artsakh are a concern for all of humanity.”

Grigori Martirosyan, Agency CEO



In spring 2025, representatives of the **“Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh”** also visited Armenia on a working mission. The delegation visited Gyumri, Yerevan, and Tatev, where they met with children and parents benefiting from the “Wings” program and discussed methodologies with program specialists. This helped deepen the understand the evolving needs of displaced families, and adapt the program to real-life challenges.



Key Challenges and Response Measures



- **Employment and housing difficulties** are prompting a new wave of migration. We are developing integrated programs to help families adapt and engage youth in economic activity.
- **Lack of timely psychological support** leads to accumulating trauma. We identify such children and offer them additional individual therapy sessions.
- **Limited donor support** due to global challenges makes it harder to attract new resources. We are diversifying funding sources and expanding our partner network both within Armenia and internationally – including private donors, international organizations, and grant-making foundations.
- **Social tension and integration issues** between displaced and local populations are growing. To counter these trends, we intentionally involve local children in the program.

Looking Ahead

The current cycles of the “Wings” program in Tatev and Kapan will conclude by August 2025. Afterward, we will evaluate the outcomes, summarize the results, and begin designing the next phase of the program. Our goal remains unchanged: to accompany displaced families with care, attentiveness, and creativity on their path to recovery.

We sincerely thank the Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh (France), Saint Sarkis Charity Trust (United Kingdom), and all our friends and partners who believe in the power of care and healing. Thanks to their support, children and families from Artsakh have received the assistance they need – and the hope for a better future.



"WINGS4ALL": YOUTH AS THE DRIVING FORCE OF TATEV'S ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE

The **"WINGS4ALL"** program launched in March 2025 with an ambitious goal: to transform the dual challenges of forcible displacement of Artsakh Armenians and economic difficulties of Armenia's rural regions into opportunities for sustainable development, dignity restoration, and entrepreneurship development.

With support from the **H. Hovnanyan Family Foundation** and in collaboration with **Innobiz NGO**, we are implementing a comprehensive entrepreneurship program for families in the heart of the Syunik region – in the Tatev area. Through engagement of displaced and local residents, especially youth as agents of change, the program aims to promote long-term economic sustainability and social cohesion.

This report presents the main achievements of the program's first four months, community response and program impact, as well as priorities for the next semester.

Main Objectives

1. **Entrepreneurship skills development** – 6-month course on small business fundamentals, marketing, budgeting, and legal aspects.
2. **Youth leadership development** – engaging young people in family initiatives as co-authors and leaders, emphasizing innovation and initiative.
3. **Economic strengthening** – providing scholarships and startup grants for launching real businesses.
4. **Community integration** – organizing events and creating platforms for joint education and interaction between local and displaced families.
5. **Sustainability and local capacity development** – training local coaches to ensure long-term program impact.

Building Trust and Engagement

The first step of the **"WINGS4ALL" program** team was to create strong connections with the local community. This was not simply gathering participants, but striving to listen, understand, and work together.

We started with consultations with local leaders, including Tatev Community Deputy Head Marat Gerasimyan, active youth of the Tatev Community Center, and leadership of the "Wings of Tatev" Ropeway. These meetings were coordinated with the community's five-year development plan and "Tatev Renaissance" research program.

To raise public awareness, an information campaign was conducted through partners' social media. In March-April, two meetings were held at the Tatev Community Center, where local and displaced families became acquainted with the program's objectives and participation conditions.

The response exceeded expectations: more than 50 families applied, and the application deadline was extended to engage more interested parties.



Participants and Demographics

As of July, the program had fully engaged **66 people**, of whom **58% are women**, highlighting the inclusive nature of the **"WINGS4FALL" program**. Participants represent four villages of Tatev community – Shinuhayr, Khot, Halidzor, Svarants, as well as Goris city.

The program is based on intergenerational interaction:

- **61%** of participants under 30 years old,
- **30%** aged 30-45,
- **9%** over 45.

This combination of youthful enthusiasm and mature experience creates a favorable environment for learning and joint development.



Launch of Educational Process

All participants joined the **"Byur"** online platform and began learning with the **"Idea Generation"** module. Since many, especially from the older generation, had no online learning experience, the team conducted preparatory courses and individual consultations.

Materials were adapted to the rural context written in accessible language, enriched with daily life examples, exercises simplified and localized. The next phase plans to introduce digital marketing, financial literacy, fundraising, and circular economy modules.

Participants who successfully completed the first module were invited to a mentoring session to receive individual feedback on their business ideas and strengthen confidence in their abilities.



Emotional and Psychological Recovery Investments



One of the key features of the **"WINGS4ALL"** program is the conviction that sustainable development is impossible without psychological stability. Many displaced families face trauma, loss, and chronic stress. An important support for participants has become our already operating **"Wings"** rehabilitation program, implemented in the same settlement – Halidzor village of Tatev community. It helps restore inner resources, self-confidence, and sense of dignity. The role of youth is particularly noticeable – they often become the driving force of change in the family, inspiring parents and supporting them technically and emotionally.

Official Program Launch and Shared Vision Session

In April, a launch forum was held that brought together local residents, leaders, and partners.

Marat Gerasimyan welcomed participants: ***"Tourism development is not only an opportunity but also our chance to breathe new life into the Tatev region. Such initiatives as the "WINGS4ALL" program help unite forces and build a sustainable future together with youth and families, with faith in our region."***



Program coordinator Sona Hovhannisyan presented successful examples of rural entrepreneurship, while Innobiz NGO Director Naira Margaryan presented the "One Village – One Product" model as a tool for sustainable growth.

The meeting's culmination was an interactive session: participants mapped their community's resources and "moved" to 2030, talking about their future businesses and regional life. This helped form a shared vision and strengthen faith in joint efforts.

Overcoming Obstacles

As expected, the path was not easy. It was difficult for older participants to adapt to the online format. The team responded quickly by providing individual accompaniment, youth support, and continuous encouragement.

An additional difficulty was the geographical spread of participants. To ensure equal accessibility, transportation was organized for attending available events.

Looking to the Future

In the second half of 2025, the program will focus on practical activities and implementation of business ideas. The following steps are planned:

- Completion of three core entrepreneurship modules,
- Development and presentation of preliminary business plans,
- Provision of \$200 scholarships for idea testing,
- Continuation of mentoring support,
- Leadership courses for teenagers,
- Organization of two more community cohesion events,
- Launch of training for five local coaches (facilitators),
- Final pitching: 5 best projects will receive startup grants of \$5,000 each.

During the first four months, the **"WINGS4ALL"** program became more than just a project: it transformed into a movement. Families are gaining new meaning, dreams, and skills. Through learning, joint creative work, and support, they prove that even in conditions of loss, it's possible to restore confidence, faith, and prospects.

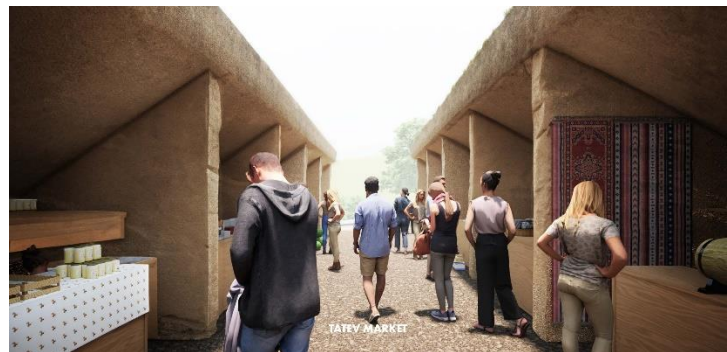
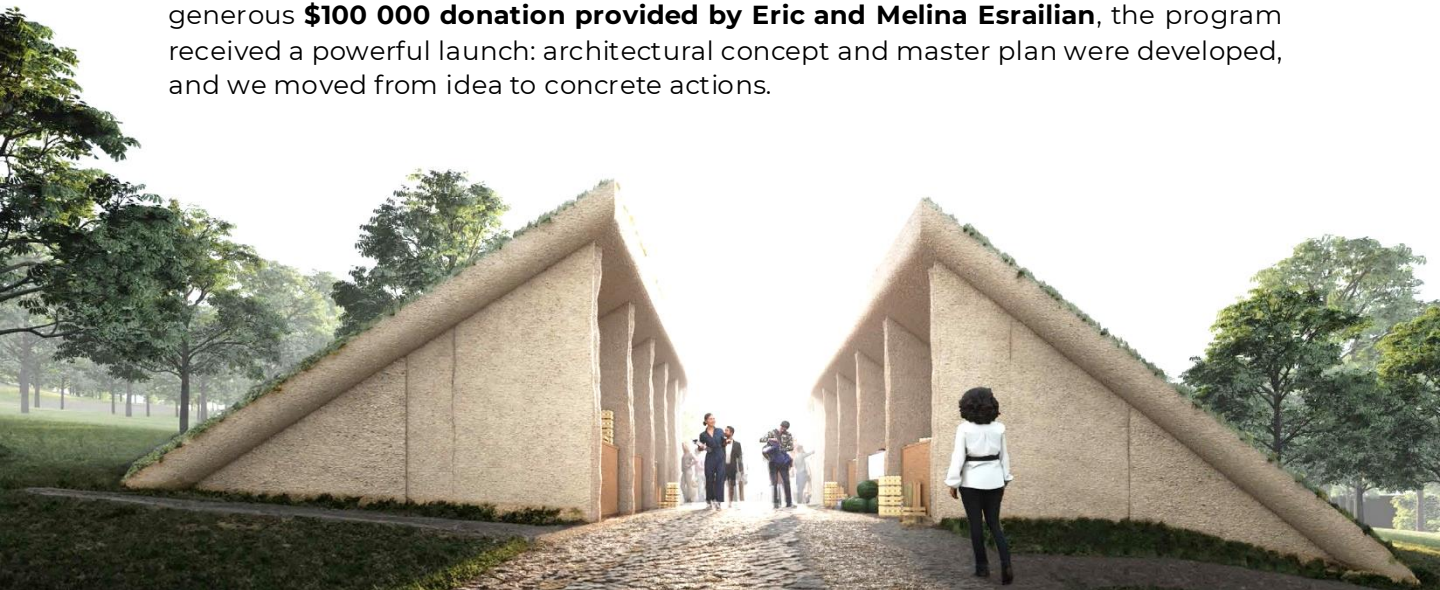
We express deep gratitude to the **H. Hovnanyan Family Foundation** for strategic and generous participation. Thanks to its investment, a new model of hope economy is being formed in Tatev that can be scaled to other regions as well.



"TATEV CAVE GARDEN": NEW MARKET IN TATEV

The **"Tatev Cave Garden"** program is a crucial initiative aimed at creating a modern market in Tatev that will become not only a commercial platform but also a gathering place for the entire community and its guests. Inspired by the history of Syunik's cave settlements, the future market will unite cultural meanings, economic opportunities, and care for people. It will accommodate both farmers and craftspeople, and travelers seeking authenticity.

This program is based on Ruben Vardanyan's vision, who from the first day aimed not only to preserve Tatev but also to give it new development. Thanks to the generous **\$100 000 donation provided by Eric and Melina Esrailian**, the program received a powerful launch: architectural concept and master plan were developed, and we moved from idea to concrete actions.



Already Implemented Phases

- The construction site has been determined, and necessary surveying work has been completed.
- The **"Tatev Cave Garden"** concept was prepared by **"Proforma"** architectural studio, inspired by Syunik's history and natural landscape.
- An application for coordination of the architectural-planning task (APT) has been submitted to Tatev Municipality and is under review.
- Development of design and estimate documentation continues.
- Fundraising work actively continues: the program has been presented to potential partners, negotiations on further financing are underway.



"This market is not simply an infrastructure project. It will become a place where local residents and guests can meet, interact, and feel themselves as part of one large community. The 'We Are Our Mountains' initiative and Ruben Vardanyan's investment open new horizons for our community."

Samvel Lalayan,
Head of Tatev Community



What is Planned

By the end of 2025, completion of design and estimate documentation is planned, and preparation of the first phase of construction work. Simultaneously, we are preparing educational programs and forming the future market management model based on social entrepreneurship principles. An important part of the program remains support for displaced persons from Artsakh and local residents: in the first phase, commercial spaces will be provided to them free of charge.

We are grateful to all those who have already supported the program and invite partnership from all those who share our faith in Tatev's future. **Tatev Cave Garden** is more than a market. It's an investment in sustainable development, employment, and the region's new identity.

"TREE OF LIFE"

INITIATIVE: PILGRIMAGE TO TATEV MONASTERY

Seeking to unite the public around spiritual values and restore the historical tradition of pilgrimage to Tatev Monastery, the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency, with the blessing of the Armenian Apostolic Church and in collaboration with several Armenian charitable organizations, organized the second annual pilgrimage to Tatev Monastery on May 31, 2025. It was a continuation of the "Tree of Life" initiative that launched in May 2024. **More than 2 000 people** joined the pilgrimage.



This year's pilgrimage focused on:

- Supporting spiritual and national rebirth, awareness of the value of connection with roots and traditions,
- Preserving Tatev's historical and cultural heritage,
- Supporting the release of Armenian prisoners,
- Continuing Ruben Vardanyan's initiatives for Tatev community development.

Within the pilgrimage framework, baptism ceremony was held for 7 Artsakh children.



**Lusine Tovmasyan,
mother of Eva baptized
in Tatev**

"I was six months pregnant when we left Artsakh. On September 23, when we were displaced from Stepanakert, we didn't know yet that I was carrying a little heart inside me – God's blessing... Eva was born in Syunik, in Goris city.

We are immensely grateful to our dear Ruben Vardanyan. We have a vow to fulfill. True, we have a very difficult path ahead, maybe we won't see it, but God willing we will see, our children will see that bright day when they return to our heart's Artsakh."



The baptismal crosses were gifted to the children by the "Emil Grigoryan Yerevan Jewelry Plant".

At the Holy Apostles Paul and Peter Church, pilgrimage participants joined in common prayer led by Archbishop Makar Hakobyan, Primate of Syunik Diocese. The prayer was dedicated to the release of Armenian prisoners held in Baku prisons.



“

“We are witnessing a special manifestation of public support today, which is inspiring. Awareness about processes or ordinary heartache, sharing in the public domain has great significance, and can have a multiplication effect on important actors of the international community, political figures making decisions.”

Siranush Sahakyan, co-founder of "Legal Way" public organization

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“Today's pilgrimage is a path during which we remember and pray for all those compatriots who are still in captivity, illegally held in Baku prisons. First of all, I want to remember Ruben Vardanyan, because his name is inseparable from Tatev's history: Ruben started a great program years ago that reinterpreted not only Tatev's architectural rebirth but also spiritual and public, and this essentially continues the patronage tradition that has centuries of history.”

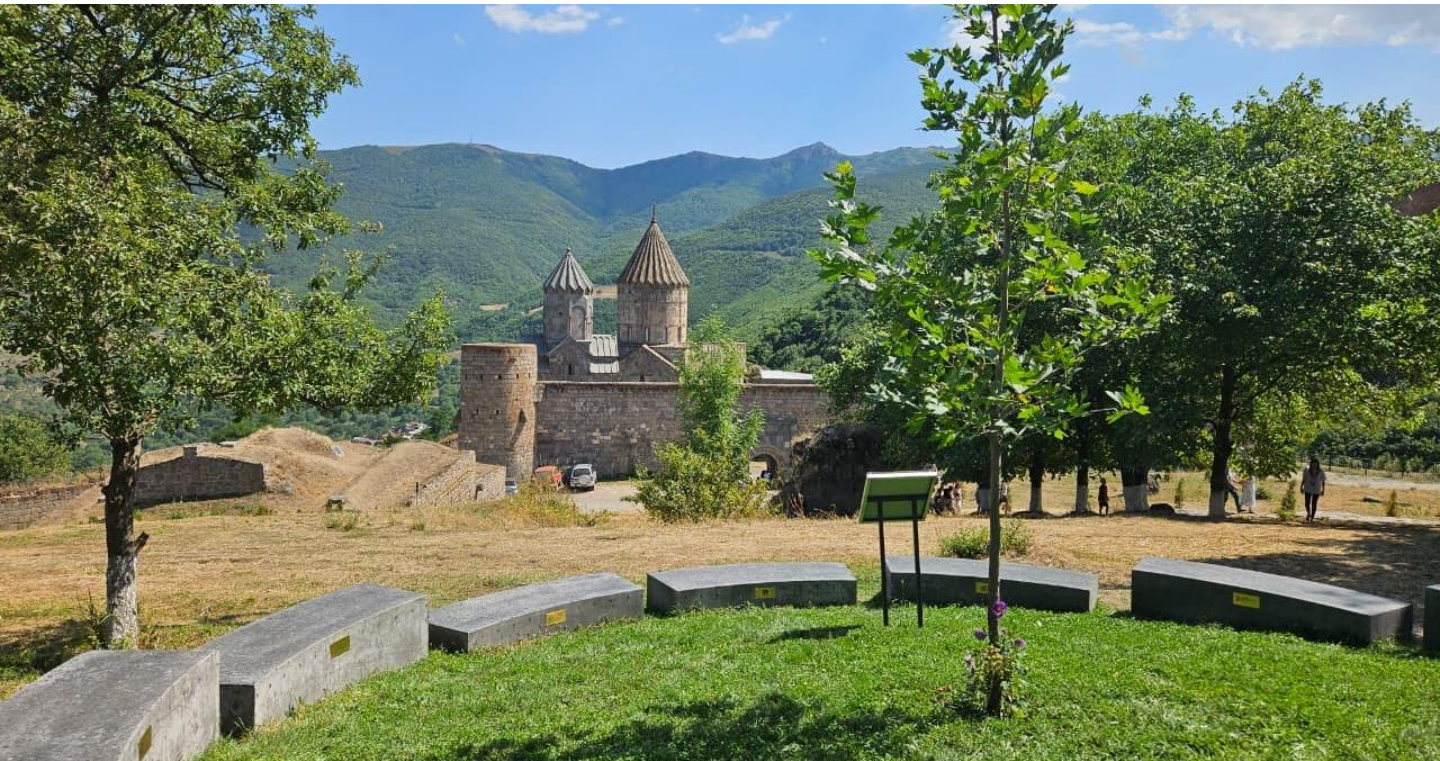
Grigori Martirosyan, "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency CEO

Within the pilgrimage framework, the "Golden Chain of Patrons: Tatev's Guardians Through the Centuries" exhibition was presented. It tells about the difficult and trial-filled path of Tatev Monastery, appreciating the legacy of Tatev's guardians from Syunik princes to contemporary benefactors.



Within the program framework, the **"Circle of Root Guardians"** architectural composition was created, symbolizing Armenian charitable organizations' contribution to preserving traditions and spiritual values passed down through generations of the Armenian people.

The return to roots event was accompanied by presentations of national culture and traditional Armenian harissa hospitality.





Pilgrimage Co-organizers

- **Armenian General Benevolent Union**
- **"Aznavour" Foundation**
- **"Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh" (France)**
- **Charitable Foundation for the Promotion of Education «Dar»**
- **IDeA Charitable Foundation**
- **Armenian Relief Society**
- **H. Hovnanyan Family Foundation**
- **NEF Armenian Branch**
- **"Orran" Charitable NGO**
- **"Teach, Armenia" Educational Foundation**
- **"Tufenkian" Foundation**
- **Tatev Community**

Pilgrimage is not simply a journey but a meaningful spiritual action. It symbolizes our striving for inner purification, awareness of our history, and strengthening of faith. It is a unifying action that connects us with our ancestors, our culture and traditions, and expresses our determination to build the future on a strong spiritual and historical foundation.

We express heartfelt gratitude to all pilgrims who joined us this year and shared this path of faith, memory, and unity, as well as to all organizations and individuals who supported the pilgrimage. We look to the future with hope and believe that next year we will again gather near the walls of Tatev Monastery.

"PRESERVING ARTSAKH": ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ARTSAKH'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The program's goal is to create a centralized, reliable, and publicly accessible online platform for preserving, digitizing, studying, and disseminating Artsakh's rich intangible cultural heritage. This is not simply an archive but a living cultural environment that connects past, present, and future, ensuring continuity and transmission of Artsakh cultural identity regardless of place of residence.

The program launched in November 2024. In the first phase, research and preparatory work was carried out – collecting and documenting archival materials, building content sections, as well as technical design of the digital platform. Overall, more than 10,000 pages of material have been collected and prepared for digital publication. They will be presented in six main sections:

- **Oral traditions and verbal expressions,**
- **Performing arts,**
- **Social practices, rituals, and festive events,**
- **Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe,**
- **Traditional crafts,**
- **Culture of livelihood.**



“Artsakh's intangible culture is the breath of our past – intangible but a powerful foundation for our identity. After Artsakh's loss, this heritage also found itself on the verge of disappearance, but we still could save it. If we don't take steps today, tomorrow may be too late. We express gratitude to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for appreciating the importance of this initiative and supporting its implementation.”

Narine Aghabalyan, Program Coordinator





“The electronic platform will be that Artsakh corner of the pan-Armenian space, whose mission should be, on one hand, preserving and making recognizable Artsakh's dialect, ethnographic and oral literature heritage cut off from its living space, and on the other hand, renewing the identity charge of Artsakh Armenians deprived of their natural territory and maintaining the connection to the possibility of return.”

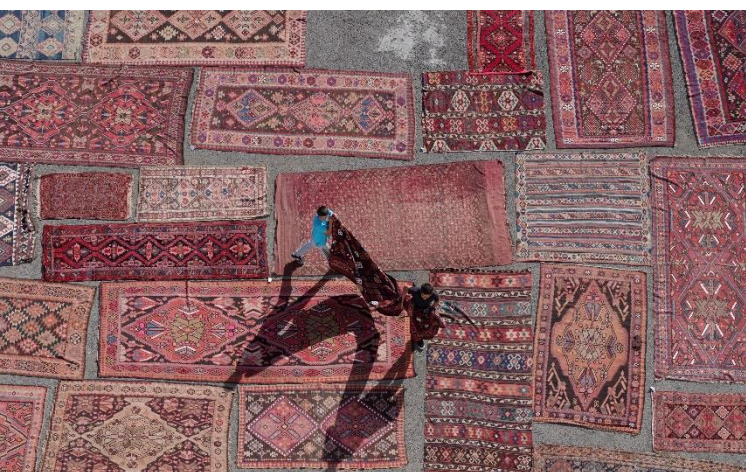
Lusine Margaryan,
Electronic Platform Content Manager



It is expected that this electronic platform will become the main repository for preserving Artsakh's intangible cultural heritage, serve as an important resource for universities, schools, and research centers, and help Artsakh Armenians living in Armenia and the diaspora preserve their identity. The platform will raise awareness of Artsakh's rich and multilayered cultural heritage in Armenia and internationally, presenting it as an integral part of world culture.

At the same time, this platform opens wide opportunities for implementing innovative ideas aimed at presenting Artsakh's cultural identity. It becomes a space for creative collaboration that unites specialists from various fields, communities, and organizations to not only preserve and modernize cultural heritage but also reinterpret it.

The platform's future development will be ensured through stakeholder coordination, mutual trust, and joint work.



FRENCH FOR ARTSAKH SCHOOLCHILDREN

The education of forcibly displaced children from Artsakh continues to remain at the center of attention for the "We Are Our Mountains" organization. Their learning process was disrupted due to the 2020 war, multiple displacements, Artsakh's prolonged blockade, and the mass displacement from Artsakh in 2023. These difficult circumstances affected not only children's physical and psychological condition but also their academic progress. Foreign language learning difficulties were particularly acute: after displacement to Armenia, many schoolchildren faced new educational challenges in terms of curriculum and language barriers. During March-June 2025, additional French lessons continued for 24 Artsakh children studying at Yerevan's Misak Manushyan Basic School No. 48. The program aimed to support those schoolchildren who found themselves in a school with intensive French instruction after forced displacement. It provided an opportunity to fill knowledge gaps and facilitate adaptation to the new educational environment.

Classes were conducted for two age groups – students of grades 3-5 and 6-9.

According to teachers and parents, this initiative, implemented for the second year, has been effective: children show noticeable progress in language learning and integrate more actively into the school community. Additional classes not only strengthened their knowledge but also created feelings of stability and support, which is particularly important for children's emotional state. The program was implemented with support from the Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh (France).



Maria Minasyan –
5th grade student at
Misak Manushyan
School No. 48

"When I came from Artsakh to Yerevan, I didn't know French at all, so I started from zero here. These classes helped me a lot to master the program and not fall behind. We learned the names of months and days, pronouns, verb conjugations, tenses. I really like French. I dream of going to France and seeing the Eiffel Tower."



Sona Kalenjyan, French teacher

"Last year, when additional French classes for Artsakh children started, we began almost from the alphabet – most children didn't know French at all. Fortunately, already in the first year they have overcome those difficulties. And this year, continuing the classes, children were able to deepen their knowledge, which is well visible from their progress. It's particularly joyful that children are active, have a desire to learn, and through their work have achieved excellent results. They come to these classes with joy – it's important for them to be with each other. It's a very cohesive group, as if one family."

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS FROM ARTSAKH

Discovering and supporting children's talents continue to remain one of our priority activities.

The "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency enthusiastically joined the **"Born in Artsakh"** educational initiative. The author and main implementer of this initiative is the "Art 23" public organization under the leadership of State Symphony Orchestra Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, UNICEF National Ambassador **Sergey Smbatyan**.



"Born in Artsakh" is a five-year comprehensive educational project aimed at professional training of talented young musicians forcibly displaced from Artsakh. By joining this initiative, the agency focused its efforts on providing program participants with necessary musical instruments – violins, violas, double basses, clarinets, trumpets, pianos, as well as computer equipment.



With support from the "Howard Karagozian" Foundation, 23 tablets were purchased and transferred to young Artsakh musicians.

Within the program framework, purchasing musical instruments for young performers who received basic musical education in Artsakh is planned. Some of them already play in orchestras. Quality instruments are not only an important condition for their professional growth but also an important support on the path to stability.



A significant event was the charitable concert held on May 12, 2025, in Zagreb (Croatia), organized to support this initiative. The collected funds were directed toward purchasing musical instruments for young Artsakh musicians. The concert was organized by Eva Kirchmayer-Bilić's initiative with support from the Armenian-Croatian community.

Thanks to the collected funds, **10-year-old Anush Aghajanyan** received her dream gift – a new violin. During the difficult days of forced displacement in 2023, when leaving home, Anush took with her the most precious thing – her violin. In Armenia, she faced new challenges: as she grew, she needed an instrument appropriate for her age.



At the "AcoustiKa" musical instrument store, **Anush** confessed with shining eyes:

"Now I believe again that I can reach my dream. I'm grateful to everyone who helps me for that."

With support from Armenian-Croatian Union Vice-President, Lecturer at Zagreb Music Academy, Professor Eva Kirchmayer-Bilić and benefactor Masis Arakelyan, as well as our other friends, the agency continues work on purchasing instruments for three other program participants.



"Music is not simply an activity for them, it's part of their identity. Through such events, we help children not lose their essence and continue developing," note the organizers."

Narine Aghabalyan, Program Coordinator

We express deep gratitude to the Howard Karagozian Foundation, Masis Arakelyan, and Eva Kirchmayer-Bilić for their generous support. Thanks to them, music, hope, and inspiration continue to live in the hearts of young Artsakh musicians.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND PUBLIC ACTIVITY

In the first half of 2025, parallel to its program activities, the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency focused attention on institutional strengthening, international representation, and participation in publicly significant initiatives. The Agency actively participated in a number of public initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of Ruben Vardanyan and other Armenian prisoners illegally held in a Baku prison.

Strengthening Institutional Capacities

Thanks to a grant from the Near East Foundation's STRIVE program, the agency significantly expanded its communication and representative capabilities. Within the program framework, multimedia materials presenting the organization's activities were developed, and the official website was updated, now operating in four languages – Armenian, English, Russian, and French.



Special attention was paid to digital advancement: a one-year SMM strategy was developed, including coordinated work on social networks, content planning, visual identity strengthening, and engaging new audiences.

To broadly present our activities, a short documentary film about the agency was created, showing main directions, values, and creation history. Additionally, five videos about individual programs were prepared, emphasizing participants' real stories, achievements, and impact on local communities. These materials are already being used for both public communication and presenting the agency to potential partners and donors.

Online Communication and Social Media Presence

During January-June 2025, the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency continued maintaining active presence on digital platforms, which was an important tool for community communication and raising awareness about programs. Main emphasis was placed on organic (non-paid) reach.

Facebook continued to remain the main platform for information dissemination and audience engagement. During the semester, the following was recorded:

- Total page views: **563 682** (growth of 172% compared to previous semester)
- Engagement: **11 962** (nearly triple growth)
- New followers: **+814**, total page followers: **20 153**

The most effective content was photo reports, but short videos (reels) also showed high engagement potential.

On **LinkedIn** platform, significant growth was recorded:

- Page views reached **44 953** (growth of more than 11 times)
- Follower growth was entirely organic
- Highest engagement indicator was recorded in March during the support campaign dedicated to Ruben Vardanyan

Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube platforms are still passive, but analytical data shows positive trends. In the future, focusing on improving content quality, ensuring regularity, and engaging new audiences is planned.



International Media Attention to Agency Activities

In spring 2025, the French newspaper *Le Figaro* published an article about Artsakh that also covered the activities of the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency. The article presented the agency's main humanitarian and educational initiatives, including the "Wings" program, support for young musicians, and the intangible heritage preservation program. Special attention was paid to the humanitarian mission carried out by the organization under conditions of forced displacement of tens of thousands of people.

We express gratitude to **Le Figaro editorial team** for objective coverage of the difficult situation and interest shown in our activities. Such publications contribute to raising international awareness and strengthening solidarity with the people of Artsakh.

Participation in Expert Discussions

In June, the agency team participated in the conference titled "Sustainable Development for Artsakh Forcibly Displaced: Future Opportunities," organized by AGBU and HEKS/EPER. Agency Social Programs Director Armen Mangasaryan presented a report on accessible housing and economic stability for displaced people.



"We value such platforms that allow not only exchanging experience but also finding joint solutions to the most acute problems," he noted.

In July, Agency Deputy Director Narine Aghabalyan participated in the "Voice of Art" conference. The discussion aim was to reveal existing challenges, cultural actors' needs, and form a vision for preserving and continuing Artsakh's cultural heritage. During the panel discussion on "Artsakh's Voice in Art," N. Aghabalyan spoke about challenges and strength of cultural self-expression under displacement conditions.



"There was an Artsakh cultural system that was destroyed overnight. Culture people are scattered today; many have already emigrated from Armenia. But they remain carriers of cultural memory. They should have been given a new mission – to reveal and present Artsakh's cultural identity and ensure its transmission to new generations. However, this did not happen," – N. Aghabalyan.

IMPLEMENTED PROGRAMS IN NUMBERS AND IMPACT GEOGRAPHY

In the first half of **2025**, the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency, together with partners, implemented programs and initiatives worth more than **\$188 000** (see table), impacting the lives of approximately 8,500 people in various regions of Armenia.

PROJECT	USD	LOCATION	DURATION	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES	INCLUDING DIRECT BENEFICIARIES
"WINGS" REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED CHILDREN FROM ARTSAKH AND THEIR PARENTS	79 861	Dilijan, Gyumri, Yerevan, Tatev, Kapan	December-March, January-April, March-June, April-July, May-August	1 020	255
"WINGS4ALL": YOUTH AS DRIVING FORCE OF TATEV'S ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE	8 923	Tatev	April-October	224	56
"TATEV CAVE GARDEN": NEW MARKET IN TATEV	11 597	Tatev	2025-2026	5 000	200
"TREE OF LIFE" INITIATIVE: PILGRIMAGE TO TATEV MONASTERY	64 306	Tatev	May	2 000	2 000
"PRESERVING ARTSAKH": ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ARTSAKH'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE	9 557	Web space	January-October		
FRENCH FOR ARTSAKH SCHOOLCHILDREN	2 951	Yerevan	March-June	90	25
SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ARTSAKH MUSICIANS	4 779	Yerevan	2025	108	23
OTHER PROGRAMS	2 914				
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND PUBLIC ACTIVITY	3 894				
TOTAL	188 782			8 424	2 559

All work was performed thanks to financial donations or material-technical support from a wide circle of agency supporters (partners, donors) from numerous countries: Avet Mirakyan and "Arev" Educational-Social Charitable Foundation, Gevik Baghdasaryan, Saint Sarkis Charity Trust (UK), "Association de Soutien à l'Artsakh" (France), Charitable Foundation for the Promotion of Education «Dar», H. Hovnanyan Family Foundation, "Aznavour" Foundation, Armenian Relief Society (ARS), Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), IDEa Charitable Foundation for Armenia Development Initiatives, Masis Arakelyan, Howard Karagozian Foundation, and many others (list attached).

We express sincere gratitude to Ruben Vardanyan's family for invaluable support shown to the "We Are Our Mountains" Development Agency during this difficult period.

DONORS OF FIRST HALF 2025 PROGRAMS

Araks Arakelyan	Evgeniya Paturyan	Mikhail Ayanyan
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Armenian Relief Society	Gevik Baghdasaryan	Sergey (surname not specified)
Artashes Kazakhetsyan	Gor Nahapetyan	Sergey Filimonov
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We express heartfelt gratitude to all donors for their support, as well as to our partners and supporters, upon whose efforts our achievements are based.

